



FIA Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Mattel & Newaygo FIA employees team up to make a difference

Newborn & family, Grand Rapids' DeVos Children's Hospital & Renucci House all benefit

From Jim McCormick, Director
Newaygo County Family Independence Agency
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When Avery Jorgensen was born last Sept. 18 his parents knew he would require special care for the first month or two of his life. They didn't know it would be almost Christmas before he could come home.

Avery, son of Earl and Alicia Jorgensen of Grand Haven, was born with an enfaloseal, a condition where abdominal organs develop outside of the abdomen. Only one in 50,000 children are born with that problem.

Avery's initial surgery occurred shortly after birth but setbacks including an infection required him to stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the hospital.

As the stay lengthened Alicia and Avery's chief nurse became concerned about him getting the proper amount of stimulation. Rigid sterilization rules prevented most infant mobiles from being allowed in the unit but Alicia was able to find one that was appropriate and provided visual, audio and light stimulation.

While she was staying every night at Spectrum's onsite guest house, Renucci House, the "Flutterbye Dreams Lullabye Birdies" mobile gave Avery sensory stimulation Alicia could not. It was so effective hospital staff wished they had more for their other tiny patients in the 95-bed Neonatal Services Unit.

Alicia kept her extended family up to date by posting progress notes and pictures on a special Web site. One of those family members is Avery's grandmother, [Pat Jorgensen](#), an eligibility specialist at the [Newaygo County Family Independence Agency](#). Many of Pat's coworkers were concerned for Avery and all that the family was going through and were looking for a way to show their support. A need and a plan soon came together.

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Today's big story



Joan Rikli of DeVos Children's Hospital and Kirk Bart of Renucci Hospitality House (left) received 24 mobiles from Mattel and \$500 from [Pat Jorgensen](#) (right front) and [Geraldine Archbold](#) of the Newaygo County Family Independence Agency.

FIA employees approached their manager and requested that the month of December be designated "Casual for a Cause" – where employees donate money for charitable purposes in exchange for a more relaxed dress code. They wanted to use the money to buy a dozen mobiles for the hospital.

Once management agreed, they contacted toymaker Mattel to see if they could purchase mobiles at wholesale prices to stretch the donated money even further.

Through Peter Atherton of Gifts-In-Kind, Mattel's charitable partner, Mattel generously agreed to donate 24 mobiles free of charge. Mattel gives away hundreds of thousands of toys year round and has a special affinity for neonatal units worldwide.

What to do with the money the employees raised? That answer came quickly to the staff. They had often had clients with children at DeVos who needed to stay at Renucci House, but even their \$20 a night fee was hard for people living in poverty to come up with. Now, through the employees' generosity, \$500 is available to low-income people who need the services of Renucci House.

Foster Care Advisory Committee

From Bernard Lawler
Genesee County FIA, Flint
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FIA director Marianne Udow met with the Children's Foster Care Advisory Committee on Nov. 3 at their meeting held at the Office of Professional Development Training Center in Lansing. Udow invited the committee to look at the how children can be assisted to have a better experience in foster care, how the system can be simplified, and how we can better assist those children that are aging out of the system.

She also invited the committee to continue to review foster care policy and to make recommendations to remove policies that are not value added.

The committee was developed in July 2001 to provide a forum for the foster care supervisors from FIA, private agency partners, zone offices and the Family Advocate to discuss issues that impact

children's foster care. These topics include pending legislation, best practices, policy and procedural changes or other areas that affect staff, management, and/or the children and families we serve. Foster care supervisors should forward any issues to their zone representatives if they would like them addressed by the Foster Care Advisory Committee.

For more information contact committee cochairs Bernard Lawler at LawlerB@michigan.gov or Sonia Noorman at SNoorman@lcfsmi.org



Foster Care Advisory Committee members with FIA director Marianne Udow (front l-r): Penny Spencer, Jan Carda, Marianne Udow and Bernard Lawler. Second row: Geneva Harvey, Vivian Ford, Margarita Shukla, Mary Jo Sabaitis, Kathryn Ross, Zoe Lyons, Ken Snyder. Third row: Kimberly Jones, Mary Chaliman, Watisha Sims, Verdetta Love, Suzanne Stiles-Burke and Pat Kempker. Not photographed: Sonia Noorman, Susan Blackburn, Luci Stibitz, Joe McDermott, Carolyn Rayford and Yvonne Strand.

We all need to believe

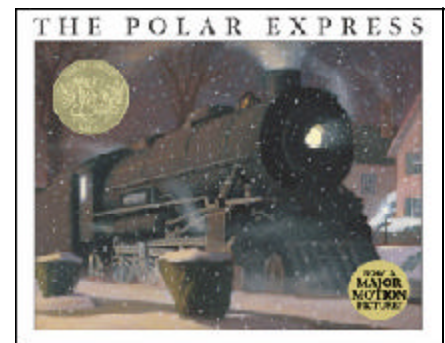
From Mary A. Schoen, Administrative Assistant
Kent County FIA, Grand Rapids
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All of us make a contribution to some charity or fund raising event from time to time. We rarely get to see the good that comes as a result of that donation.

[Nancy Schroder](#) is an exception to this rule.

On Dec. 16 Nancy – an adoption specialist with Kent County FIA – was able to attend two of the adoption hearings held in Grand Rapids. The judge presented the adoptees with the book “The Polar Express” and told them it was donated by FIA employees. Each book had a label inside that said, “Compliments of the Kent County Family Independence Agency on Adoption day.”

The kids were thrilled! It was such a wonderful sight to see. The funds used to pay for the purchase of these books were raised by one of Kent County's “jeans day” in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Adoption Committee.



The message of The Polar Express is “believe”. What an appropriate gift for the 49 children whose adoptions were finalized Dec. 16. The vast majority of them had gone through our abuse and neglect system. They truly needed to “believe” that things would get better.

Good things happen to those who wait and, as each of these children begin their journey with their new families, we believe things will only continue to get better.

In Muskegon County, “Dress for A Cause” helps community people

By Lori Purnell, Information Technology Technician

Muskegon County FIA, Muskegon

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Muskegon County FIA employees have been participating in casual days since November 1999. The cost is \$1 every Friday, or the last business day of the week. Our administration also granted us four annual weeklong events each year, the cost being \$5 for the week.

Three of these long events are for nonprofit agencies or charities. One is for employee purposes such as help in funding our annual picnic, publishing “A Taste of FIA” cookbook, supplying our break rooms with microwaves, refrigerators, toasters, and can openers, and purchasing shirts. We raise an average of \$4,500 annually.

We have a cover letter that is sent to area nonprofit agencies once a year explaining how our program evolved along with a form for their agency to fill out to request money. We place a limit of \$200 on the amount of money an agency can request at one time as we want to be able to fill as many requests as we can. We have given to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation for four years now totaling over \$2,700.

An example of some of the requests we receive are first aid supplies, layettes, over-the-counter cold and flu items and disposable diapers for the Women & Family Support Services Department at the local Rescue Mission. Muskegon Pregnancy Services requested and received funds to purchase stylish clothes for teen moms-to-be. The Salvation Army annual Thanksgiving dinner is always one of our donations.

We also provided funds for paper supplies at the many supper houses in Muskegon County. We gave to the Muskegon County Child Abuse Council for the purchase of Baby Think-It-Over dolls and the Youth Enrichment Program at Mission for Area People received money for sewing supplies for young teens. We even sent 12 mentally challenged adults to Muskegon Whitecaps baseball game.

This is just a very small sampling of the agencies and items the employees at Muskegon County have helped fund since our “Dress for A Cause” began.

Our weeklong event in December 2004 was for the elderly during the holidays. Our theme was “Leave No Senior Behind”. We “adopted” one of our local area nursing homes. The cost for the week was \$5 per person or a man, woman, or generic gift.

We contacted the activity director at the facility for ideas on gifts. We also created holiday banners for all to sign to be hung at the facility. The Monday after our casual dress week event we were able to present to Brookhaven Medical Facility \$400 in cash to fulfill their Angel Tree requests plus a box of other gifts, Christmas cards and banners. The activity department at Brookhaven shopped for the gifts.

Our final casual event of 2004 was to replenish our local “needs” closet. We worked with our Community Resource Department for suggestions on items needed. We took no money for this event; the cost to dress casual was to bring in a bag of hygiene products, baby products or personal needs items.



Muskegon FIA employees have used proceeds from "Dress for a Cause" to raise funds for community activities and for employee purposes like publishing "A Taste of FIA" cookbook (above), break room supplies and microwaves, refrigerators and purchasing shirts (right).



Date: Nov. 29
To: Jane Johnson, Director
Muskegon County FIA, Muskegon Heights
Subj: Your staff

I am writing to commend you and your staff for your commitment to finding absent without legal permission (AWOLP) children in Muskegon County. It is clear to me after having reviewed that most recent statewide data that you are managing the AWOLP children very well. I was particularly impressed with the work done by **Cheryl Nebedum** and **Julie DeRose** to find (a child whose name is not being used). The efforts by your staff in conjunction with the Prosecutor's Office and the court demonstrated what is possible when the issue of AWOLP children is made a priority. Not only did the interagency work result in the child being returned to care in Muskegon County, it also provided us with several strategies to share as best practice procedures with other jurisdictions. When children are in our care, we have a responsibility to provide them with safe settings that address their needs. While the statewide AWOLP data show that it is not always possible to accomplish this, the work that you and your staff are doing is helping us frame a better response to this difficult issue.

Maura D. Corrigan, Chief Justice
Michigan Supreme Court

■ *Cheryl Nebedum is a services program manager and Julie DeRose is a services specialist with Muskegon County FIA. Maura Corrigan was chief justice at the time of this letter. Since that time Clifford Taylor has been elected chief justice of Michigan Supreme Court.*

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

Date: Oct. 28
To: Charlotte Ferrari, District Manager
Macomb County FIA, Sterling Heights
Subj: **Temissia Hutchins**

I am writing in regard to Temissia Hutchins, who works in the Sterling Heights office. I was recently in the office where Ms. Hutchins assisted me with a problem. Not knowing what to expect, and having had negative experiences with other state agencies in the past, I feared the worst. Ms. Hutchins quickly allayed my fears thanks to her demeanor and efficiency. At all times while dealing with me, she displayed a high degree of professionalism. She was extremely courteous and took the time to explain things to me. I was also impressed by (her) capabilities. Despite the complexity of the financial questions posed by my inquiry she immediately comprehended the situation and provided helpful advice. I wish to thank Ms. Hutchins for her help as well as commend her for her intelligence, courtesy and professionalism. She made what could have been a most unpleasant experience into one that was both pleasantly and mutually productive.

Mark J. Stotsky

Chesterfield

■ *Temissia Hutchins is an eligibility specialist with the Macomb County Sterling Heights District office.*

Date: Oct. 1
To: Gary McGowan, Family Independence Manager
Macomb County FIA, Mt. Clemens District
Subj: **Mary Russell**

I am writing to comment on one of your employees. In this time of state budgets cuts and overworked employees, there is, I am sure, no lack of horror stories coming from the citizens of this state. I have encountered an employee that seems to love her job. I called on Mrs. (Mary) Russell for assistance filling out a form for my 90-year-old mother. Mrs. Russell was knowledgeable, courteous, capable and very professional. What the state of Michigan needs (besides money) are more employees like Mrs. Russell.

Robert W. Francis

Lake Orion

■ *Mary Russell is an eligibility specialist with Macomb County FIA Mt. Clemens District office.*

Submitting client letters for publication

1. Ensure your supervisor knows about it and approves.
2. Have the customer sign **Consent for Publication** form which is Word form 0199.
3. Send the letter and a copy of the signed consent form to Larry VanDeSande by e-mail or by fax (517-373-8471). Keep the original consent form in the client file.
4. Include the letter writer's hometown and the job classification(s) of employee(s) cited in the letter.

FIA Matters! is a product of Michigan's Family Independence Agency
Marianne Udow, Director Karen Smith, Director, Office of Communications
Larry VanDeSande, editor Submit stories by e-mail to: FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov